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School receives visit from Gulf Region Division Command Sergeant Major

By Van Williams
Gulf Region Division



Command Sergeant Major Eloy Alcivar presents the school's principal with a desk pen set. [USACE Photo]

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Children in one Baghdad suburb are one step closer to having a better school thanks to the efforts of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Iraqi construction workers.

Finishing touches are being made on the Thifaf Al Neel School in Al Bayaa, near Baghdad.

The area was an insurgent stronghold

until a few months ago and the project was behind schedule. But thanks to the U.S. military surge, security improved and construction crews were able to continue work.

USACE Gulf Region Division's Command Sergeant Major Eloy Alcivar recently inspected the project, and remembered his first visit there. "When I first came to the



USACE Gulf Region Division Command Sergeant Major Eloy Alcivar inspects window installation in a classroom of the Thifaf Al Neel school near Baghdad. The school has been renovated and expanded thanks to the work of Iraqi contractors and the Corps of Engineers. [USACE Photo]

school, the principal and an English teacher asked me for help," Alcivar said. "They touched my heart."

The \$659,000 project renovated parts of the secondary school and built an addition to the building that nearly doubles the size of the facility. The new addition includes nine classrooms and four large laboratories, and will provide classroom space for 300 students.

Beyond the bricks and mortar, this school represents an investment in the future of Iraq--its children. "This is a poor neighborhood and the security situation here was not helping," the principal said. "We are isolated from other areas of the education department. Even the school

teachers and staff couldn't get to those areas to ask for supplies," she continued.

After the inspection, Alcivar gave the students treats, and gave the principal a desk pen set. The sergeant major also donated \$1 million Iraqi Dinars [approximately \$830 U.S.] of his own money to the school. The school's principal was grateful to receive the donation. "The female students in this area have been deprived of many educational supplies, such as computers, laboratories and other school activities," she said.

"Don't give up hope," Alcivar told the principal. "We will help you all we can."

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